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QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 4458

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, IS

SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE BEGIN COALITION

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE NEW BEGIN GOVERNMENT WILL BE DOMINATED
BY THE PERSONALITY OF THE PRIME MINISTER. HIS DECISIONS
IN THE COALITION NEGOTIATIONS AND CABINET FORMATION
CLEARLY INDICATE THAT HE WILL BE IN FIRM CONTROL IN THE
NEW GOVERNMENT. THERE WILL BE AN "INNER CABINET" COMPOSED
OF BEGIN, DAYAN, WEIZMAN AND PROBABLY SHARON WHICH WILL
DEAL WITH SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS WHILE ECONOMIC
AND DOMESTIC MATTERS WILL BE KEPT TO THE REST OF THE
MINISTERS. THIS INNER CABINET WILL BE COMPOSED OF
EXPERIENCED IMAGINATIVE LEADERS AND THE REST OF THE
CABINET WILL BE MADE UP OF LESS PROMINENT BUT CAPABLE
INDIVIDUALS. END SUMMARY.

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1. ALTHOUGH IT IS TOO EARLY TO COME UP WITH
DEFINITIVE CONSLUSIONS ABOUT THE PRECISE NATURE OF
THE NEXT GOVERNMENT, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF
PRELIMINARY JUDGMENTS THAT CAN BE MADE, BASED ON
WHAT WE KNOW OF THE PERSONALITIES OF THE NEW
MINISTERS AND ON THE DYNAMICS OF THE INTERRELATION-

SHIPS OF THE PARTIES THAT WILL FORM THE GOVERNMENT.

2. THE PREDOMINANT PRIME MINISTER. BEGIN, LIKE HIS PREDECESSOR, FACED THE SITUATION IN WHICH HE HAD ONLY LIMITED CONTROL OVER WHO HIS MINISTERS WERE TO BE. THE ALLOTMENT OF PORTFOLIOS HAS USUALLY COME AT THE END OF THE INTER-PARTY NEGOTIATIONS AND SOMETIMES AFTER INTRA-BLOC BARGAINING. HOWEVER, THE INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE CHOSEN AS MINISTERIAL CANDIDATES WERE ESSENTIALLY PARTY CHOICES.

3. BEGIN, HOWEVER, HAS PROCEEDED TO OVERRIDE SUCH CONSIDERATIONS FOR SOME OF HIS APPOINTMENTS. HIS CHOICE OF DAYAN AS FOREIGN MINISTER ILLUSTRATES THIS DIFFERENCE. HE DECIDED HE WANTED DAYAN AS FOREIGN MINISTER, CONSULTED ONLY WITH HIM, AND THEN ANNOUNCED HIS DECISION WHICH CAME AS A SURPRISE TO HIS POTENTIAL COALITION PARTNERS AND EVEN TO MEMBERS OF HIS OWN PARTY. HE HAS SELECTED A KNOWN AND TRUSTED COLLEAGUE FOR HIS MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND HAS RETAINED ARIK SHARON IN THE CABINET, ALTHOUGH IN A DIFFERENT POSITION, OVER THE OPPOSITION OF MANY COLLEAGUES BECAUSE HE THINKS HIGHLY OF HIS TALENTS.

4. BEGIN HAS APPEARED FLEXIBLE IN THIS PROCEDURE.
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HE HAS ACCEPTED COALITION PARTY NOMINATIONS FOR SOME LESSER CABINET POSTS. HE WITHDREW THE NOMINATION OF GEULA COHEN AS DEPUTY MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SHARON AS ADVISOR FOR INTELLIGENCE MATTERS WHEN HE ENCOUNTERED OPPOSITION. BUT THIS FLEXIBILITY HAS BEEN WITHIN CERTAIN SPECIFIC PARAMETERS TO WHICH HE HAS ADHERED. THIS ILLUSTRATES THE BEGIN DOMINANCE AND THE "PRESIDENTIAL" NATURE OF THE WAY IN WHICH HE WILL CARRY OUT HIS PRIME MINISTERIAL DUTIES.

5. HIS COALITION NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE DMC ILLUSTRATE THE SAME POINTS. GIVEN THE CHAOTIC CONDITION OF THE PREVIOUS COALITION GOVERNMENT AND THE LACK OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S AUTHORITY, BEGIN MAY HAVE FELT THAT THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THE DMC WANTED TO JOIN THE CABINET COULD QUICKLY LEAD TO A SIMILAR SITUATION OF DIVIDED AUTHORITY. IT WAS THIS POINT OF PRIME MINISTERIAL CONTROL OF THE CABINET IN ADDITION TO THE DIFFERENCE OF VIEW ABOUT THE WEST BANK--BEGIN HAD GIVEN DAYAN SOME ASSURANCES REGARDING SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK

NOT TOO DIFFERENT FROM THOSE WHICH YADIN HOPED TO EXTRACT--WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO THE BREAKDOWN OF DMC/LIKUD NEGOTIATIONS.

6. THE INNER CABINET. BELOW THE PRIME MINISTER THERE WILL BE A SMALL AND INFLUENTIAL GROUP OF MINISTERS, WHICH WILL INCLUDE BEGIN, DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN, FOREIGN MINISTER DAYAN AND MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE SHARON (WHOSE PARTICIPATION IN THIS GROUP WILL NOT BE RELATED TO HIS PORTFOLIO) AND WHICH WILL MAKE DECISIONS REGARDING FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY. IT WILL NOT ESCAPE THE ATTENTION OF OBSERVERS IN THE ARAB CAPITALS THAT ALL FOUR HAVE MILITARY EXPERIENCE
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AND THREE ARE FORMER GENERALS OF CONSIDERABLE RENOWN. THIS WILL LIKELY LEAD TO CLAIMS THAT

BEGIN HAS ESTABLISHED A "WAR CABINET". WE BELIEVE THAT EVEN IN THIS GROUP BEGIN WILL BE DOMINANT AND WILL SET THE TONE BUT THE FOUR WILL PROBABLY FUNCTION WITH A GREAT DEAL OF COOPERATION IF NOT UNANIMITY. INCIDENTALLY, WE WOULD EXPECT THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WOULD BECOME SOMEWHAT CLOSER AND THAT SOME OF THE ACTIVITIES WHICH IN RECENT YEARS HAVE PASSED FROM THE MFA TO THE MOD WILL RETURN TO THE FORMER UNDER DAYAN.

7. SOMEWHAT SEPARATE FROM THIS INNER CABINET WILL BE THE OTHER MINISTERS CONCERNED WITH ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL MATTERS. BEGIN HAS INDICATED THAT EHRlich WILL HAVE ESSENTIALLY A FREE HAND IN ECONOMIC MATTERS AND HE SHOULD SET THE TONE, IF NOT THE SUBSTANCE, OF ECONOMIC POLICY. THIS PART OF THE CABINET INCLUDES A NUMBER OF UNTRIED INDIVIDUALS ALTHOUGH SEVERAL (HOROWITZ, PATT, MODAI) HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMEN. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF BURG (INTERIOR) AND HAMMER (EDUCATION), NONE OF THE OTHERS HAVE HAD MINISTERIAL EXPERIENCE AND ARE RELATIVELY UNKNOWN OUTSIDE BUSINESS CIRCLES.

8. TALEN. THE NEW CABINET WILL NOT BE APPRECIABLY YOUNGER THAN THE OUTGOING RABIN GOVERNMENT. BEGIN, DAYAN, EHRlich AND BURG ARE ALL IN THEIR 60S WEIZMAN AND SHARON ARE IN THEIR EARLY 50S AND THE OTHER MINISTERS WILL BE SOMEWHAT YOUNGER. NEVERTHELESS THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL ATTEMPT TO GIVE THE
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APPEARANCE OF VIGOR AND CHANGE AS THEY MOVE TO REPLACE WHAT HAD COME TO BE PERCEIVED AS AN OLD AND TIRED LEADERSHIP.

9. IT IS, OF COURSE, TOO EARLY TO MAKE ANY FIRM JUDGMENTS YET ABOUT THE STRENGTH AND COHESIVENESS OF THE NEW CABINET OR ABOUT HOW WELL IT WILL PERFORM. WHILE SOME OF THE MINISTERS ARE NOT WELL KNOWN, OTHERS HAVE PROVEN THEIR ABILITIES TO A CERTAIN EXTENT IN BUSINESS AND IN OTHER FIELDS AND WILL PROBABLY PROVE TO BE AT LEAST AS COMPETENT AS THE MEN THEY ARE REPLACING. UNQUESTIONABLY THE QUALITY OF THE CABINET IS SOMEWHAT LOWER THAN IT WOULD HAVE BEEN IF THE COALITION HAD INCLUDED THE DMC. A NUMBER OF HIGHLY COMPETENT MANAGERS AND EXPERIENCED TECHNOCRATS WOULD HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE FOR CABINET AND SUBCABINET POSITIONS FROM YADIN'S MOVEMENT. THE CABINET WILL BE FLESHED OUT BY THE ADDITION OF A NUMBER OF DEPUTY MINISTERS, MANY OF WHOM WILL PROBABLY ADD TO THE GOVERNMENT'S COMPETENCE, AND BY A NUMBER OF SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE. ONE OF THE LATTER WILL PROBABLY BE SHMUEL KATZ, WHO IS SLATED TO BECOME THE PRIME MINISTER'S ADVISOR ON FOREIGN INFORMATION. THIS IS INDICATIVE OF BEGIN'S CONCERN ABOUT ISRAEL'S IMAGE ABROAD -- A FUNCTION WHICH RABIN, ALLON AND PERES DEALT WITH THEMSELVES.

10. COHESIVENESS. THE NEW CABINET SHOULD FUNCTION AS A COHESIVE UNIT, FOR SEVERAL REASONS. THE MINISTERS WILL KNOW THAT THEIR GOVERNMENT HAS A SLIM MAJORITY AND THAT THEIR DOWNFALL WILL BE INEVITABLE IF THEY DO NOT HANG TOGETHER. SECOND, THEY WILL BE HEADED BY A LEADER WHO WILL BROOK LITTLE DISSENT AND WHO HAS ALREADY DEMONSTRATED

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IN THE CABINET FORMATION THAT HE INTENDS TO BE THE MASTER OF HIS HOUSE. IN ADDITION, THE NEW MINISTERS ARE COMING INTO THE GOVERNMENT FROM YEARS IN THE OPPOSITION WILDERNESS AND ARE ANXIOUS TO PROVE THEMSELVES, BOTH INDIVIDUALLY AND AS A UNIT.

11. STRONG MEN. AT IT LAUNCHING, IT APPEARS THAT THE STARS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL BE THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF, DAYAN AND WEIZMAN. BEGIN'S PERFORMANCE AS LEADER OF THE NEW TEAM WILL BE SUBJECT ONLY TO THE LIMITATIONS OF HIS HEALTH. HERE WE WOULD POINTOUT THAT HIS HEALTH MAY BE A FACTOR NOT ONLY WITH REGARD TO A FATAL OR INCAPACITATING STROKE; IT WILL ALSO BE A LIMITATION IN THE SENSE THAT HE WILL PROBABLY BE UNABLE TO DEVOTE A FULL WORKING DAY TO HIS GOVERNMENT. WE MAY ALSO FIND THAT HE IS LIMITED IN THE AMOUNT OF FOREIGN TRAVEL AND PERHAPS EVEN IN THE AMOUNT OF TOURING THROUGH ISRAEL WHICH HE CAN UNDERTAKE.

12. DAYAN IN THE EYES OF MOST FOREIGN OBSERVERS, IS THE MINISTER WITH IMAGINATION AND MOST EXPERIENCE IN DEALING WITH THE WORLD'S LEADERS. HOWEVER, THUS FAR, HE HAS TAKEN CARE TO STAY OUT OF THE LIMELIGHT AND NOT TO ECLIPSE BEGIN; HE SEEMS TO BE WILLING TO ACCEPT SECOND PLACE. WEIZMAN, YOUNGER AND MORE VIGOROUS THAO DAYAN, WILL PROBABLY BE COMPETING WITH HIM FOR PUBLIC ATTENTION AND COVERAGE. SHARON IS BRIGHT-- SOME WOULD SAY BRILLIANT--AND WIDELY KNOWN AND RESPECTED FOR HIS MILITARY CAPABILITIES, BUT EVEN HIS ADMIRERS ADMIT THAT HE CAN BE ERRATIC AND UNPREDICTABLE.
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THERE UNDOUBTEDLY WILL BE CONFLICTING OPINIONS BETWEEN THESE STRONG PERSONALITIES BUT WE WOULD EXPECT THAT, AT LEAST INITIALLY; THEIR DISAGREEMENTS WILL BE KEPT UNDER CONTROL BY BEGIN. THE CHEMISTRY WHICH DEVELOPS AMONG THESE THREE AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER WILL BE A VERY IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE MINISTERS AND MAY SET THE TONE FOR THE CABINET AS A WHOLE.
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